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ABSTRACT

Growing in ministry is wholistic, as ministry is wholistic. Ministry is a calling and profession, and continuing education in ministry must be of help in both areas. Both attitudinal and behavioral growing should be considered--attitudinal as it has to do with a minister's being, calling, person, sense of worth, and spirituality; and behavioral as it has to do with a minister's doing, profession, job, skill employment, and competence. Contemporary research shows too much emphasis on professionalism and neglect of the spiritual formation of ministers. Growing in ministry should be self-directed. There is also a need for collegiality in the growing-learning process. Such feedback, concern, and correction from other professionals and lay persons are necessary for growth. Finally, ministers should realize that there are obstacles to growth and crises to which they are subject, but that the pain caused by these obstacles and crises is a necessary part of growing. (YLB)

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GROWING IN MINISTRY

Reflections based on current research

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I prefer action words, and, particularly, action-process words, to terminus words. For example, "growth" strikes me as a terminus word. A person has reached his/her full growth. A person has grown up--a goal has been attained. "Growing," on the other hand, is an action-process word. When a person is growing, he/she is in process. The focus tends to be on where the person has come from, balanced with where the person is going to. Or, to put the matter another way, the focus is on the present, on affirming the validity of what is happening now. Therefore, I choose to call this paper "Growing in Ministry."

So often we seem to write with the awareness of the hot breath of a critic scorching our attempts at creativity. "Why didn't you cover that topic?" "You mean you haven't read any of Lorsch's work on this subject?" "Your focus is a bit narrow, isn't it?" Let me say from the beginning that I recognize some of the limitations of this paper. First of all, I have not read all of the research on growing in ministry. I have been given a number of books, periodicals and manuscripts to peruse as background for the paper. I have been highly selective in what I have actually used. My understanding is that one of the major reasons I was asked to write this paper is because the committee did not want a reporting out of the research so much as a sifting of the research through the filter of my experience and reflections. A computer could tally up the major points of the materials that have been written on this subject. But only a human being can bring the dimension of his/her uniqueness to the task. I am pleased with that, and affirm the impossibility of my being replaced by a computer. It is also flattering to be asked to do this paper.

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A word about focus: This paper is about the growing in ministry of professional church leaders, not the growing of lay persons in their ministry. It is also about growing as affected by continuing and lifelong education. In other words, growing as it relates to learning. The focus is also on the U.S. experience.

Perhaps another word about the research for this paper would be in order. Dr. William Thompson, who teaches homiletics at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, responded, when asked the question "How long did it take you to prepare this sermon?", with the very appropriate line -- "All my life." I have listed books at the end of this paper, as well as some periodicals which I have found helpful. But most of my growing in ministry, and the major insights which I have into that growing have been influenced by workshops in which I have participated (on spiritual growth, experiential theologizing, educational mission exploration, continuing education biennials, as well as SACEM conventions), career counseling at the Center For the Ministry in Oakland, CA, and my own attempts at counseling American Baptist ministers and spouses in the western states. And, finally, my growing has been stimulated and facilitated by persons. Among the most influential are: Gene Bartlett, Joseph Boles, Thomas Brown, Terry Burch, Robert Charpentier, James Chuck, M. Edward Clark, Florence Fairhill, Eduardo Font, Henry Fox, Harold Frazee, Connolly Gamble, Alfred Garrotto, William Herzog II, Leland Hine, Leon Jones, Shirley Jones, Wiley Kehrli, Harry Kruener, John Landgraf, Alvin Lustie, Clair Malcomson, Laurel Loomis Malcomson, Warren Lane Molton, W. Berkeley Ormond, Howard Rice, Mark Rouch, Robert St. Clair, Leroy Sandberg, Karl Schultz, Dayle Scott, Ross Snyder, William Thurmond, Robert Torbet, O. Boyce VanOsdel, Roger Velasquez, and Maxwell Vines. And the late, and greatly missed, William Shinto.

THE GUIDING IMAGES OF MINISTER

In my forty-nine years of living, twenty-two of which have been as an ordained minister, I have tried to discover guiding images which say "minister" to me. So many roles are played by ministers--prophet, manager, teacher, mentor, priest. Various provocative images have been suggested: Shepherd,

spiritual father or mother, elder brother or sister, wounded healer, clown. My preferences are two: One role word that has a strong evocative flavor, and one image from the so-called secular arena. A minister, for me, is primarily a priest and a sad clown.

A priest or pontifex is, as Urban Holmes states, "A bridge between humankind and the numinous or God."[1] In other words, a mediator. In all religions the priest or holy person or religious functionary has performed a mediating role. The priest bridges the gap between sacred and profane, holy and worldly, divine and human. In the Christian context, the priest is a "stand-in" for Jesus Christ, the true Mediator.

Let me picture the priest for you in symbolic and evocative language:

One who is there for God, when God does not seem to be there.

The embracer of God's lonely and afraid--walking hand-in-hand with them through dark caves, over high mountain passes, down deep chasms.

In dying, a person to rage against, and then to grab onto at the last moment.

One who makes no distinctions between good people and bad people. Only human people. Only those wh o need to know that God is near, even when the priest is not certain and is experiencing his or her own dark night.

James Dittes has used a metaphor to speak of this role in his provocative book When The People Say No:

> To be a minister is sometimes like overhearing one side of a telephone conversation but not realizing it is a conversation with a third party. Suppose you are in one room and you hear a person in another room speaking. The words sound strange, a bit off focus, not really directed to you as you understand yourself. 'I wish you wouldn't play your records so loud,' you might hear, when you don't even play records at all. You start to defend yourself, to straighten out the speaker, to explain how wrong he is about you. Then you walk into the speaker's room and discover that he is not talking to you at all; he is on the telephone. Suddenly you can drop your defensiveness, empathize with the speaker, join him in his complaint against the loud records. Being a

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[1] Holmes, Urban T., III, The Priest In Community (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), p. 13

> minister is very much like that--with the special complication that people are often looking right at you instead of talking into the telephone. But what is happening is exactly the same: People only seem to be talking to you when, in fact, they are dealing with somebody else and they need your help to do that. Even though you are in the room where they know you belong, when they place you, they are really talking on the telephone to somebody else and they need you by their side, in their room, while they do that.[2]

The sad clown: I grew up with the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus as the only truly great circus. The premier clown for many years with that circus was Emmett Kelly, the clown with the sad face. This is the way I think of ministers and of myself as a minister.

David Switzer speaks of the clown as "the genuinely human thread that runs through the entire circus, holding it together as a coherent and meaningful process rather than just a series of unrelated, flawless, expert acts, but also brings to bear upon these other acts a perspective that enables us to see beyond the present moment."[3] Furthermore, "The clown represents the depth and breadth of humanity, the point of contact with the gamut of emotions experienced by the people in the audience, providing a point of identification that we do not easily have with the 'expert technicians,' such as the trapeze and high wire artists, the animal trainers, and the riders."[4] Finally, "the clown does this as a highly trained, competent professional whose professional acts grow out of his/her own humanity and his/her understanding of the humanity of others."[5]

I think of the sad clown as one who wears baggy clothes. An awkward-looking person, though, in fact, very agile. One who "bucks us up," helps us to get in touch with the child in us, both the joyous and the sad child, or, perhaps, both sides of the one child. The clown performs, basks in our approval. There is no clown without an audience. He/she is an absurd figure who doesn't fit, is not normal looking. One who is out of step, out of time. Not the main attraction, but a bridge between acts, often a foil for the superstars. A clown is the butt of jokes, always picked upon, never on top. Yet seemingly in touch with a depth that is known fully only to the clown. Clowns have been around for a long, long time.

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[2]Dittes, James E., When The People Say No (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 144
[3]Switzer, David K., Pastor, Preacher, Person (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), p. 13
[4]Loc. cit.
[5]Loc. cit.

The sad clown is, in Nouwen's terminology, a "wounded healer." The sadness comes from a sense of the evil in life, the wound in the body of humankind. This wound can issue in a deep loneliness. As Nouwen states, "the wound of loneliness is like the Grand Canyon--a deep incision in the surface of our existence which has become an inexhaustible source of beauty and self-understanding."[6] The Christian clown knows that "life does not take away our loneliness; it protects and cherishes it as a precious gift. .. our loneliness reveals to us an inner emptiness that can be destructive when misunderstood, but filled with promise for him who can tolerate its sweet pain." [7]

The sad clown knows the depth of the human heart, and, particularly his or her own heart. This provides a balance to thinking of oneself as a priest or mediator.

> Scratch most ministers and you will find right below the surface a person who shouldn't be God's representative. We've seen too much of ourselves; we know too much about ourselves that those trusting saints out there would never suspect; and we have fears that no person who has taken on 'this holy ministry' ought to harbor. But, that's us. This is the gang that God has called together to point to the holy. And quivering fingers and all, that's what we'll be doing today--mostly.[8]

The priest and the sad clown. How does this minister grow?

GROWING IS WHOLISTIC

Growing in ministry is wholistic, as ministry is wholistic. Ministry is a calling and a profession. A calling of God to be priest. A profession of skillful and competent and sad clowns. Continuing education in ministry must be of help both in our calling and in our profession.

One of my most important learnings has come from my involvement in recent years in continuing education events with black church leaders. (I am a white person.) Looked at from a surface point of view, it would appear that there is

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[6]Nouwen, Henri J.M., The Wounded Healer (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1972), p. 86

[7]Loc. Cit.

[8]Kadel, Thomas E., editor, Growth In Ministry (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 154

a lot of time spent in inspiration and fellowship and not enough in skill development. For example, in courses on preaching there seems to be some preaching on the part of the teacher. The classroom is a combination of worship experience and instruction. For awhile I had trouble understanding this phenomenon. Then it dawned on me that the black church approach to continuing education was really much more wholistic than I had realized. White males have often tended to so separate the calling from the profession that we have taught professional skills with very little inspiration and have talked about the "call" with a modicum of professional understanding.

Evans writes: "..many pastors are acknowledged as professionally trained counselors and academically prepared specialists, but often are not perceived as persons of spiritual maturity and insight. 'Skilled but not committed' is a judgment applied with disturbing frequency to the performance of the pastor."[9] When we in SACEM went to the convention in Pasadena in 1980, many went with mixed emotions, not certain that it would be really helpful to deal with spirituality and continuing education. After all, does not education have to do primarily with skills and the enhancing of professionalism? No, it does not. In part, to be sure, but not primarily and certainly not exclusively. In writing to professionals in all fields, Cyril Houle states, "Learning is the process by which people gain knowledge, sensitiveness, or mastery of skills through experience or study."[10] (underlining mine)

Another way of talking about this matter is to make a distinction between "attitudinal" and "behavioral" growing. "Attitudinal" has to do with our being,

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[9]Evans, Robert A., "Theology of Ministry: Theological Premises for Doctor of Ministry Programs" (an article in Papers from the National Symposium on: Issues and Models of Doctor of Ministry Programs, edited by G. Douglass Lewis, The Hartford Seminary Foundation, Hartford, CT, 1980), p. 30

[10]Houle, Cyril O., Continuing Learning in the Professions (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1980), p. xi

calling, person, sense of worth, spirituality. "Behavioral" has to do with our doing, profession, job, skill employment, competence, the developing of our gifts. Yet even this distinction has its drawbacks. For it may keep us from realizing that the "Be-er" is the "Do-er." Attitudes condition behaviors and behaviors affect attitudes. If we are not competent professionals we usually have trouble affirming our self-worth. If we have little sense of our self-worth, we will use our skills to manipulate others and to feed our egos. Somehow we need, in our educating, to refuse to teach a skill without dealing with the one who is using the skill. And we also need to refrain from being too overly impressed with a person's spiritual sensitivity when they may also be incompetent managers, pastors, or teachers. (I don't know if he is any good at ministry, but he is certainly a fine person.)

The contemporary research shows, as I understand it, that we have tended to go too far down the road toward professionalism and have neglected the spiritual formation of ministers. The Readiness For Ministry project suggests that people have a strong desire to be led by persons who are in touch with the reality of God and who know something of "spiritual direction." I was in a spiritual growth workshop not long ago with an equal number of ministers and laity. My perception was that very few of the ministers in the group would be thought of as spiritual guides to whom one would turn. As I analyzed that, and decided that there were only two ministers in the group to whom I would turn for spiritual direction, I wondered if it was totally because I sensed in them that they were mediators and were deeply spiritual. No, it wasn't. It was also because I felt that they knew what they were doing. They would not flounder around in a session with me, but would have ability in terms of drawing me out, relating as a peer, and helping me to discover and own my own spirituality. That is competence, professionalism, skill. Spirituality and skill cannot be separated. Growing in ministry is growing in the calling and the profession, attitudinally and behaviorally, in spirituality and in competence.[11]

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[11]Cyril Houle has an interesting way of dealing with the above issue in non-religious terms. He speaks of the three modes of continuing education: Inquiry, Instruction, and Performance. In the inquiry mode there is the creating of a new idea, policy, synthesis, or strategy of action. In this act, learning occurs as a kind of by-product. For example, as we participate as a member of a planning team, putting together a retreat or workshop, we may reflect on this process and perceive that we have learned a lot. The developing of the plans was the focus, learning was a by-product, though it is helpful to reflect on the by-product in order for it to be more intentional learning. Instruction is highly intentional.

GROWING IS SELF-DIRECTED

Growing in ministry is not something that just "happens." We inevitably get older, but we do not inevitably grow. Growing comes primarily through reflecting on experience and acting on those reflections. This is purposeful learning.[12]

Now the above sentiment may seem absurdly simple and obvious. But it is certainly not so in the practice of ministry. Robert Kemper suggests that, in general, clergy do not feel responsible for their own education. They expect the seminary, an institute, or a denominational judicatory to offer them what they need. He says, "Clergy...are takers, not seekers. Sometimes they even feel guilty about not taking enough."[13] It is certainly my experience with ministers that most tend to be passive when it comes to continuing education. However, I am seeing some changes occur, particularly when they experience career development counseling. As a matter of fact, it was through my experience of being a counselee in such a program that I became a convert to self-directed learning. The experience of thinking about my future under the guidance of a professional career counselor convinced me that I needed to take charge of my life. The position I am now in was one that I went after in a very intentional manner. Then when I attended Tom Brown's program on the Survey of Resources for Development in Ministry, I discovered some ways of helping ministers, including

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11 (cont.) It is, 'the process of disseminating established skills, knowledge, or sensitiveness.' For example, we teach ministers how to conduct worship, and how to do it in a sensitive, wholistic way. Finally, performance is the 'process of internalizing an idea or using a practice habitually, so that it becomes a fundamental part of the way in which a learner thinks about and undertakes his or her work.' Again, this is a wholistic approach to learning. The performer, the sad clown, is a reflective professional who knows what he or she is doing. She or he is not just "acting silly." Houle, op.cit., p. 32

12 Gross, Ronald, The Lifelong Learner (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977) "Learning..is indeed a much larger part of our lives than has been thought. In fact, it seems fair to go further and suggest that learning--purposeful self-change--is the cutting edge of our personal development. It is the way we invest time and energy in our own growth. It is our way of making and remaking ourselves, in small ways and large, throughout our lives." p. 60

13 Kemper, Robert G., The New Shape of Ministry (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), p. 67

myself, to affirm the "gospel" of self-direction in continuing education.

For me, the most helpful writer in this area has been Ronald Gross. He lists some characteristics of the lifelong and self-directed learner, which I feel are relevant to our understanding of the growing minister:

> ..open to new experiences, ideas, .. insights. You like to make things happen instead of waiting for life to act on you. .. You feel better about yourself when you are successfully learning something new. .. You've learned enormously from certain important experiences which you don't usually rate as 'subjects.' .. The kind of life you want to lead five years from now requires that you begin to learn new things now. .. You believe that investing in your own growth is the best investment in your future--occupational or personal.[14]

He also lists what he considers to be some of the truths about adult learning.

> 1. Adults who take command of their own learning often master more things, and master them better, than those who rely on being taught. They tend to have greater zest, retain more of what they have learned, and make better use of it in their living.
> 2. Adults learn in different ways than children. We have a different sense of .. what's worth learning and why.
> 3. No one can learn <u>for</u> you, any more than a surrogate can love for you or eat for you. .. Your education is something you must tailor to yourself, not something you can get ready made.
> 4. No particular way of learning is in itself superior to another. .. How you learn depdends on your temperament, circumstances, stage of life, as well as your need, taste, or ambition. [An instrument that some of us have found helpful to use in this regard is the "Learning Style Inventory," by David A. Kolb, McBer and Company, 137 Newbury St., Boston, Mass. 02116]
> 5. There is no prescribed curriculum that everybody must or should or can learn in order to be 'well educated.' .. Virtually every aspect of your life --work, leisure, personal relationships, community activities--has the latent power to enhance your 'second education,' if you can find or create the ways to learn it. (Gross lists the following elements which can make up what he calls "the invisible university"--libraries, learning exchanges, networks, learning groups, television, churches, growth centers, arts centers, do-it-yourself colleges such as free universities, correspondence study, tape cassettes, new 'open' programs at colleges, educational brokers, games, and activist groups.)
> 6. The prime time to learn is when your own need, curiosity, taste, or hunger impels you in a particular direction.[15]

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[14]Gross, op.cit., pp. 15-16
[15]Ibid., pp. 17-18

I believe that many ministers feel that there is something vaguely sinful about engaging in self-direction, whether in career planning or learning. If we are priests, mediators, we are to be fully in God's hands, are we not? As God's emissaries, who are we to plan what God should be doing in this world? Or, if we are God's sad clowns, wouldn't we lose the cutting edge of our sense of the absurd and our identification with the child in us if we become too intentional? Why not do as E. Stanley Jones used to say, "Let go, and let God?" My response to this is both autobiographical and theological. First, the autobiographical. When I am writing something for publication or preaching a sermon or teaching a class or engaging in some similar act of creating, I have the sense that I am doing this consciously and intentionally, drawing upon my history, knowledge, and skills as fully as possible. But I have the feeling also, at exactly the same time, that I am not fully in control, that I am not totally my own person. At times it takes the form of feeling that something is flowing through me that I do not understand. I look at what I have written and I don't remember thinking all of that to myself. Or I sense, when I am preaching, that I am witnessing to something that is not totally within my experience, that I am being in some sense "used," though, hopefully, not manipulated in a demonic way. There is good Biblical basis for this feeling, is there not? We think of the utterances of the prophets, of Moses before Pharaoh, of the apostles in their preaching and healing. Remember Paul's phrase--"I, yet not I." Thus, the theological response: God's intending and our intending are mixed together. This is part of our calling. If it is true that we are priests, then God should be expected to work through us. But if it also is true that God has chosen each of us in our uniqueness, and not as pure functionaries, or, at worst, robots, then God intends that we contribute to our priesthood. If we are sad clowns, then we are in touch with the joy of creating, the sense of fulfillment that comes from saying and doing things that get a response from others, as well as the deep awareness of the contingency of life, the absurdity of all human effort, and the pain of being a child-adult.

Allow me to try one more way of making my point regarding self-directed learning and growing. As I think of our twelve year old son, who is emotionally "up" one day and "down" the next, who so desires adult approval and yet wants to live his own life, I am thinking about my life. He is so much like me. When I was young, I thought that everyone liked me and cared about me. I felt protected and comforted. When I cried out in fear, there was one to hold my hand. Then as

I moved into adolescence and young adulthood, I felt the sting of loneliness and abandonment. It seemed to me that I was now utterly alone and that life was to be lived as a solitary human being. When the chips were down, no one really cared that much. Not even those who loved me and whom I loved. It seemed, at times, not even God. I realized the truth of what Nouwen writes: "..we keep hoping that one day we will find the man who really understands our experiences, the woman who will bring peace to our restless life, the job where we can fulfill our potentials, the book which will explain everything, and the place where we can feel at home."[16] But we do not find these and we feel in despair. Then, hopefully, comes the realization, like a cool wind blowing through our souls, that we have the opportunity, the challenge, the overwhelming privilege, to take charge of our lives, and remake our world. That we no longer have to be victims of our past or slaves of our fears. We can stand alone and go on with the joy as well as the pain of that realization. And, finally, we come to the point where we can welcome back all of those who do care, all who do affirm us and whom we affirm, but no longer treat them as gods who will come when we call and bring us complete comfort, but as fellow solitary human beings with whom we engage in pilgrimage, as equals in the sight of God who woos us, abandons us, woos us again, as we continue on the immense journey.

GROWING AND COLLEGIALITY

This leads us into my next point about growing in ministry--the necessity of collegiality. The nature of ministry is such that it cannot be done alone. Rather, it is done with and for persons. With and for other ministers and with and for lay colleagues. Jesus did ministry with his colleagues among his disciples and with others such as Mary of Magdala, the rich young man, and the Syrophoenician woman. The mediator who stands between God and humankind needs not only humankind in general, but the company of other mediators. The sad clown needs an audience to be a clown, and other clowns to be a professional.

Let us look at this matter of collegiality in growing from the perspective of professionals in various fields. Here we are greatly helped by Cyril Houle in his

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[16]Nouwen, op.cit., pp. 86-7

landmark book Continuing Learning in the Professions. He stresses the matter of collegiality in a number of ways and under a number of headings. For example, when he is talking about the stimuli for continuing education he mentions, among other stimuli: The expectations of other professionals, the inspiration that comes from persons in our profession, institutional encouragement, and the nurturance provided to the members of a profession (many of us experience these stimuli in our involvement in SACEM).

> Many strategies exist to make colleagueship more educative: the encouragement of shared off-duty experiences; the designing of meetings and conferences so that they include opportunity for unstructured discussion sessions; the creation of journal clubs, discussion groups, special interest associations, retreats, and colloquia.[17]

When he writes about designs for learning, he mentions "mentorship" -- "The mentor may be willing to serve only as a resource person or as a guide to other resources, requiring the learner to take the full initiative for inquiry."[18]

One of the striking characteristics of the medical profession, as I have observed it, is the recognition of the need for colleagues in order to grow in the profession. Doctors are continually consulting with each other. Their assumptions seem to include at least the following: We cannot individually know everything there is to know about disease, we need the monitoring of peers so that we do not get sloppy in our practice, and we need to continually upgrade the profession as a whole. I would imagine also that one strong motivation for collegiality would be that doctors see themselves as continually dealing with matters of life and death. A lot is at stake.

For some years I was a parish pastor. As such, I tended to be a bit of a "lone wolf," trying to do my best, failing and then getting up and trying again. When I entered into the life of seminary teaching, I began to experience peer collegiality. After many years in that profession I swore that whatever I did from then on, I would never take a job in which I would be separated from professional peers. In our Center for the Ministry in Oakland, California, for example, we continually consult with each other, plan together, and conduct workshops together. The "we" includes two career counselors, one personnel consultant, a financial counselor, two administrative assistants, two other support staff, and myself.

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[17]Houle, op.cit., p. 113.
[18]Ibid., pp. 212-13

When some of us put the American Baptist Seminary of the West Doctor of Ministry program together, we saw the need for collegiality in the growing -learning process. Thus the program begins with an interview with the director, who then becomes a colleague. The next step is a week-long workshop with a career counselor, the director, myself, and a number of other prospective D.Min. students. We become resources to each other in a screening and developmental process. The student is then linked up with a faculty advisor who becomes his/her colleague throughout the process. Two committees work with the student. One consists of lay colleagues in the place of ministry (lay persons in a congregation, for example). The other is made up of professional peers, such as teachers, lawyers, social workers, and ministers in the community. These persons monitor the student's growing and learning, and help with the professional paper. There are also persons who become colleagues as they examine the student for candidacy and for the awarding of the degree, not to mention those who read the paper. The assumption throughout is that ministry is with colleagues and growing is a growing with pilgrims along the way.

It is particularly important to recognize that there are many ministers today who tend to see lay people (and sometimes even professional peers) as the "enemy." These include not only parish pastors, but denominational executives and seminary professors. They see laity or ministers with whom they minister as persons who erect barriers to their ministry. We used to say, only half-jokingly, around the seminary that "If it weren't for the students we could really get our work done." I have talked to denominational officials who can't understand why others don't appreciate all that they are doing and would be willing to do for them. All of us have had the experience of chatting with parish pastors and listening to the barrage of griping, expressed and unexpressed hostility and downright hate that can come from those who feel continually frustrated in being unable to do the ministry they think they should be doing. It is almost as if Jesus had said, "If it weren't for the pharisees, scribes, Herod, the disciples, God, and the cross, I could have been a terrific Messiah."

I am convinced that one of the problems which ministers face today in our growing is that so few opportunities are either given or created in which ministers and laity study together. Why do we so often add to the problem by focussing exclusively on the educating of ministers with each other? It is certainly a

step forward for ministers to recognize each other as peers who can support and resource each other. That is better than the "lone wolf" approach. But for growing in ministry to take place in a congregation, for example, aren't we going to have to do more in the way of offering opportunities for ministers and laity to learn as peers together? If we do this, I would hope that the focus would be not only on learning how to do "church work" together. I am "convicted" by Evans' comment that "Sensitive lay persons who are demanding recognition and assistance in ministry are not seeking to become professional assistants in worship, teaching and administration within the church. Rather, most seek recognition, support and empowerment for ministry that is prophetic, healing and reconciling in their own vocations and activities beyond the churches."[19]

We need the feedback, the concern, and correcting, as well as the insights of others in order to grow. It is my hope that in our profession we will see a need that is seldom addressed in the literature, namely, that we move not only into peer-group learning with other professionals, but more deeply into minister-laity learning, where all of us see and experience each other as colleagues. Perhaps the strength of a sad clown is that we empathize with him or her. We know, deep within us, that we are all sad clowns--child-adults lost and redeemed in a dark wood. Or, as Nouwen puts it, regarding teachers and students,

> ..both sharing the same reality--that is, they are both naked, powerless, destined to die, and, in the final analysis, totally alone and unable to save each other or anyone else.[20]

TRANSITIONAL INTERLUDE

Let me tell you a story as a kind of transition and summary of what I have written so far. Let me tell you how I learned to teach. In 1965 I had been out of graduate school for five years. In that time I had never been taught anything about the teaching of adults, other than a one semester course in Christian education in seminary. It was evidently assumed that I would know how to teach by observing master teachers. Nor had I taken any work on my own in the field of education. I had taught for two years in an undergraduate college and had been

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[19]Evans, op.cit., p. 31

[20]Nouwen, Henri J.M., Creative Ministry (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971) , p. 19

a parish pastor for three years. Now I was doing what passed for teaching in a seminary. My colleague, Ed Clark, a professor of Christian education, told some of us about a two day seminar for adult leaders of youth which was to be led by Dr. Ross Snyder of Chicago Theological Seminary. I had a great deal of respect for Ed and I knew that Snyder was practically a saint in his eyes. I had very little interest in going to such a workshop, however, as I did not consider myself an adult leader of youth. I was in the business of being a professor in a graduate school. I was no ordinary layman or church worker. But I went, partly because I was curious about Ross Snyder, and partly because some other colleagues were willing to go as well. In two days with Ross and ninety other persons, I learned how to teach. How did that happen? For one thing, I observed and participated in Ross's techniques. What he did was so compatible with who I am that I immediately sensed that if I were to truly teach, it would be much the same way as he did it. I saw what he did with ninety people and realized that it could be done with many more or many less. But it wasn't only technique. It was primarily manner. He communicated the feeling that we were colleagues with him. He learned from us and we learned from each other. He helped in the enabling of our learning from and with each other. That experience was the catalyst for opening my eyes to a new vision. I now began to try out not only Ross's ideas, but my own. For I felt released to do so. My attitude towards teaching and towards students began to change. I now saw myself, not as a homiletician, but as a teacher. My vocation actually began with that weekend. My learning now became much more self-directed, but with colleagues. And I might also add that as we shared, laughed, cried, grew, and looked into the mystery with Ross that we sensed that we were encountering Another, mediated through him.

THE PAIN AND JOY OF GROWING

And, finally, brothers and sisters, we must face the reality of growing, including the pain. Many tend to have a "consumer" approach to growing. They assume that growing will occur only during a succession of peak experiences. These are the ones who want to come through every workshop, seminar, learning event, with a feeling that they are now happier and more fulfilled as a result. Growing can only occur, they feel, through succeeding. I well remember when a Center colleague

and I led a simulation game entitled "Powerplay" with a group of ministers. No one came out of that session feeling that it was a terrific experience that they would love to repeat. It was grueling and self-revealing. In most cases what people saw in themselves was not pleasant to see--namely, how they used power and how they failed to use it and how afraid they were of it. I felt that it was one of the most "successful" learning experiences I had ever co-led. But also one of the most exhausting. Once when I was co-leading an experiential theologizing workshop, one of the participants fought the other leader and I all the way and also fought with some of the other participants. We were worn out when it was over, but my co-leader said to me, "Bill, I think that their observations of how you and I acted under that kind of stress may be the most significant opportunity for learning that we could have given them." I hope so.

Houle suggests that there are four types of professionals who are engaged in learning.

1. Innovators: Continually striving to improve, have plans for what they want from learning, respond to invitational seminars, take pride in their expertise.
2. Pacesetters: Progressive, but are not the first to try a new idea. They legitimize an innovation for other people.
3. Middle Majority: They support an innovation because pacesetters have approved of it.
4. Laggards: They only learn what they have to in order to stay in practice. They are an embarrassment to their colleagues.[21]

All of us in the continuing education profession know what a delight it is to work with people who are innovators and pacesetters. What a chore it often is to try to motivate the middle majority and to sometimes be stuck with the laggards. Yet we also need to be reminded that learning and growth are not supposed to always be fun. And, for that matter, there are many barriers to growth, some of which are quite valid.

Brister lists twelve obstacles to growth for ministers. Some of the most significant are:

Low self-esteem and insecurity which leads to little sense of satisfaction with any task or experience.

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[21]Houle, op.cit., pp. 156-59

Personal compulsiveness and desire to succeed, which makes one interested in gimmicks that work now.

Fragmentation in direction because the vocation of ministry is confusing to the person.

Trying to schedule time for learning, but feeling guilty because of poor time management, leading to lack of time with family and/or with job.

Unrealistic expectations on the part of laity because of understandings of ministry which differ from one's own.[22]

Houle mentions Tom Brown's listing of the seven kinds of crises to which ministers are subject. I would feel that these give us some insight as to even more formidable barriers to growth. Thought it is important to see these crises also as stimuli to growing. The crises are: 1. Integrity--no longer believes in the creeds of the church. 2. Power--feels that neither he/she nor the church has significant community influence. 3. Capacity--sense of personal inadequacy for dealing with the situation of ministry. 4. Failure--sees him/herself on a downward path leading to a sad termination of a career. 5. Destination--doesn't know how to plan and advance his/her own career. 6. Role--can't decide what role(s) are primary. 7. Meaning--fears that the profession has no place in the modern world.[23]

Crises can be a barrier to growth if we concern ourselves solely with the avoidance of pain. Living involves pain, however. But our tendency is to avoid pain at all costs. We do this often by attempting to live in fantasy worlds such as the consumer approach to growing that I have already mentioned. We equate "being happy" with fulfillment. But true fulfillment comes in living with the pain and joy of reality. We will be unable to minister and unable to grow if we are "hooked on happiness" and the avoidance of pain. We will confine ourselves to ministering with pieces of persons--the nice and presentable parts. From Ernest Becker I have received insight into the necessity of confronting the dark side of my nature. Not only in confronting, but in validating it as a part of me, of who I really am. From Karl Barth I learn that I often do not want to meet the true God, but only the nice one. And from Rudolph Otto, the realization that the mystery

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[22]Brister, op.cit., pp. 140-41

[23]Houle, op.cit., p. 109

at the heart of living is tremendum and fascinans--fearful, awesome, and compelling.

In valid growing we learn to fashion our sense of self-worth out of a validating of all that we are, the nice "stuff" and the ugly and all that is in between. We fear growing, because we dislike pain. But we are also attracted by growing, because we feel that we can get in touch with reality, with its pain and its joy.

In our growing and our fear of it we come back again to the sad clown. Sad because of our recognition that evil, sin, and retreats from reality are a part of living in this penultimate time. But also the clown who can make people laugh in the midst of crying, who can hold out hope in the experience of holocaust. The sad clown who mediates the complexity of life, and somehow redeems it through the facing of it.

Send in the clowns, O Lord, send in the clowns.

In addition to those works which have been quoted and cited in the text of the paper, I would also list the following as being particularly helpful:

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